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Administration of justice at the United Nations

Activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/251, reaffirmed that the informal resolution of conflict is a crucial element of the system of administration of justice and emphasized that all possible use should be made of the informal system in order to establish harmonious working conditions and avert unnecessary litigation. The Assembly also welcomed the submission of the second joint report for the entities covered by the integrated Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services and requested the Secretary-General to submit such a report at its sixty-sixth session.

The present report is the third covering the activities of the integrated Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, which delivers informal conflict resolution services to the staff of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The present report contains a request for additional resources for the Office amounting to $918,400 (before recosting) under sections 1, 29D and 37 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

Summarized below are some of the main points of the present report, which covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2010.

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Regional impact

As 2012 will mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the first ombudsman function in the Secretariat, and as the regional branches and Mediation Service have now completed one year of operation, the Office has launched efforts to assess its impact and effectiveness. Following a preliminary assessment, it was found that decentralization has provided the Office with better access to its constituencies and enabled it to provide in-person intervention at the field level, which is the most effective means for conflict resolution. This was one of the primary incentives for the establishment of the regional branches by the General Assembly. The Office has also been able to develop a greater understanding of regional dynamics. Furthermore, the Mediation Service has provided staff and managers an additional alternative tool with which to resolve workplace disputes.

In terms of challenges, budgetary constraints have made it difficult for regional ombudsmen to travel within their respective areas to provide in-person intervention for the resolution of conflicts or festering issues, including in the deep field, and for the Office to deploy rapid response ombudsmen and mediation teams as needed.

Systemic issues: ombudsman services

In accordance with the mandate of the Office, the report identifies systemic and cross-cutting issues brought to the attention of the Office during the reporting period, as well as those that have been identified by the Ombudsman, together with related recommendations. Consistent with existing precedents across the integrated Office, the primary areas of concern for visitors who used ombudsman services during the reporting period were job and career, interpersonal relationships, and compensation and benefits.

Statistics

A 70 per cent increase was noted in the case volume relating to staff members in the United Nations Secretariat and a 35 per cent increase in overall case volume for the integrated Office. This was due, in large part, to the availability of on-site services provided by the ombudsmen in the regional branches.

Mediation services

The Mediation Service witnessed an increase in its caseload, with several complex and sensitive mediations leading to successful resolutions. The primary areas of concern for parties who sought the assistance of the Mediation Service were job and career; legal, regulatory, financial and compliance matters; and evaluative relationships.

Update on incentives for informal resolution

In paragraph 22 of its resolution 65/251, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure full implementation of the incentives for informal resolution that had been identified in the Secretary-General's last report to the General Assembly (A/65/303). Some of the main actions thus far implemented include: directives by senior management to all offices and departments urging use of the informal resolution process to resolve conflicts and timely responses when contacted by the Office; ongoing efforts by the integrated Office and the Office of

Human Resources Management to, among other things, offer dispute resolution training to key partners in the broader administration of justice system and interested staff; and the provision of feedback reports by the Office to certain departments, highlighting trends and systemic issues in their respective areas.

Conclusion

The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services looks forward to the General Assembly's favourable consideration of its additional resource requirements and its continued support for informal resolution as a key first step in the resolution of workplace disputes, including system-wide and speedy implementation of incentives to encourage the usage of informal resolution.

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Preamble

Core principles

As the main informal pillar of the Organization's conflict resolution system, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services uses informal and collaborative approaches to resolving conflict at an early stage. The Office is guided by the core principles of independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality, which are summarized below.

Independence

The Office maintains independence from other organizational entities, organs or officials and has direct access to the United Nations Secretary-General, executive heads of funds and programmes and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and senior management throughout the Organization as needed; access to information relevant to cases, except medical records; and access to individuals in the Organization for advice, information or opinion on a particular matter.

Neutrality

The Office serves as an advocate for justice and fair, equitably administered processes, not on behalf of any individual within the Organization, taking into account the rights and obligations between the Organization and the staff member, and the equity of the situation.

Confidentiality

The Office maintains strict confidentiality and does not disclose information about individual cases or visits from staff members; it cannot be compelled by any United Nations organ or official to testify.

Informality

Informality includes not keeping records for the United Nations or any other party; not conducting formal investigations or accepting legal notice on behalf of the United Nations; not having decision-making powers; and not making determinative findings or judgements.

I. Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

A. Ombudsman services

Trends

1. As was the case in 2008 and 2009, the top three areas of concern for visitors who utilized ombudsman services across the integrated Office[1] in 2010 pertained to job and career (34 per cent), evaluative relationships (20 per cent) and compensation

[1] There are areas in the present report that are specific to each entity and are noted as such.

and benefits (15 per cent). The majority of cases resolved through ombudsman services, emanated from offices away from Headquarters and field operations, where most staff are located. In this context, the integration of mediation with the ombudsman approach and the ease of interaction between the two (e.g., when matters initially dealt with through one approach are ultimately determined to be more appropriate for the other, the approach can be easily changed), has created a highly effective informal resource for staff members.

Scope

2. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services considers it important to provide access to informal resolution to all United Nations personnel, regardless of category. In its dialogue with the members of the Sixth Committee in 2010, the Office confirmed its willingness to serve non-staff personnel, for which the additional resources required would be modest considering the long-term gains from the investment. Experience from other United Nations organizations that are currently providing ombudsman services to non-staff personnel has demonstrated that such intervention has helped to prevent conflicts from festering without creating any undue expectations regarding their contractual status. In the Secretariat, there are 16,480 non-staff personnel in field operations and 10,080 not based in the field.[2] Those numbers exclude any Secretariat consultants and individual contractors administered by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The current decentralized structure of the Ombudsman's Office would provide easy access to that category of personnel.

3. If the General Assembly decided that informal resolution should be extended to non-staff personnel, that would require an increase in the Office's resources. In line with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, such expansion in scope would allow all United Nations employees to benefit from another mechanism of due process at minimal cost to the Organization.

External reviews

4. Analysing how the Office connects to its clients and stakeholders is crucially important to how it operates. Owing to the independent and confidential nature of its functions, the Office utilizes the services of external experts to monitor and assess its substantive performance and systemic impact and to improve the quality of its services. The Office will look at the possibility of a midterm review by a team of external experts for 2011-2012. The conduct of such reviews by outside individuals who are experts in the profession is critically important on two counts: (a) subject experts have the substantive knowledge and expertise to review all aspects of operations, and, in dialogue with relevant stakeholders and staff through surveys, to recommend how such relationships can and should evolve; (b) the conduct of such reviews by substantive experts is perceived by clients of the Office as credible and confidential and protects both the Office and its clientele.

[2] A/65/373, para. 185.

Terms of reference

5. In paragraphs 16 and 17 of its resolution 65/251, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conclude inter-agency negotiations on the revised terms of reference of the integrated Office and to ensure that they were promulgated as soon as possible. As mentioned in earlier reports, the terms of reference of the integrated Office have been the subject of extensive consultations involving staff and management, as well as the funds and programmes and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Following those consultations, the draft terms of reference were submitted for promulgation in a Secretary-General's bulletin in 2010. However, General Assembly resolution 65/251 necessitated a further review of the draft terms of reference. In accordance with established procedures, the draft terms of reference have been the subject of additional consultations and review across the system. It is expected that a revised draft Secretary-General's bulletin will be submitted for promulgation upon completion of this consultative phase.

Audit of the outreach programme

6. At the request of the United Nations Ombudsman, the Internal Audit Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted an audit from November to December 2010 focusing on the Office's outreach programme, which included the regional branches in Nairobi and Santiago.

7. The auditors concluded that since its creation, the Office had conducted several outreach campaigns aimed at increasing awareness among the staff at large about its functions and services and encouraging staff to make proactive use of the informal dispute resolution process. They also acknowledged efforts made by the Office to promote awareness among senior managers of the importance of informal resolution in the settlement of workplace disputes. The auditors further noted that the Office's communications concept for 2011-2013, which sets out the Office's outreach goals, strategy and performance measurements, should be finalized to include specific guidelines on how to implement its outreach programme to ensure that all activities and messages are delivered consistently across the integrated Office, including by its regional branches. This will be done in consultation with the funds and programmes and UNHCR.

B. Mediation services

8. As mandated by the General Assembly in paragraph 16 of its resolution 61/261, a Mediation Service was formally established within the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman to provide mediation services for the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes and UNHCR. The Mediation Service handles cases as requested by the parties to a dispute, or referred by management evaluation units, the United Nations Dispute Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, among others.

9. In 2010, the Mediation Service witnessed an increase in its caseload as its services gained recognition, and it has now started to collect data to analyse trends and patterns. The number of referrals from the Tribunals and the Administration has increased, including cases of a disciplinary nature. In this context, it should be noted that mediation cases involve various issues, such as evaluative relationships,

contractual status and terms of separation, which often entail emotional and highly sensitive matters. Also, in view of the voluntary nature of mediation, it can be challenging to secure the agreement of all parties concerned to participate in the process. It has also been observed that some parties wishing to avail themselves of mediation services approach other services simultaneously, such as the Ethics Office, the Office of Internal Oversight Services or the Conduct and Discipline Units, which could pose a challenge in managing expectations. Despite such challenges, the Mediation Service has handled and successfully resolved a wide range of cases.

Mediation principles and guidelines

10. The various stages in the mediation process and related important considerations are described in the mediation principles and guidelines, which have been available on the Office's website since 1 July 2009. This also addresses the General Assembly's request, in paragraph 17 of its resolution 65/251, for the Secretary-General to ensure that the guidelines for the Mediation Service are promulgated as soon as possible. In order to ensure the highest quality of service, the necessary modifications were introduced to the mediation principles and guidelines over time, based on lessons learned from practical experience. It should be noted that the revised terms of reference for the Office, which are in the process of being reviewed for promulgation, also include a section regarding mediation services, which is derived from the mediation principles and guidelines.

On-call mediators

11. The Office is continuing efforts to build a roster of on-call mediators, both at Headquarters and in the regions. The Mediation Service has maintained close contacts with its counterpart at the World Bank to share best practices and implement their joint project for the identification of regional mediators. The Mediation Service is currently in the process of assessing its regional needs and budget in order to recruit on-call mediators from the joint roster in 2011-2012.

Enhancing partnerships and outreach

12. During the reporting period, the Mediation Service continued to build partnerships throughout the Organization and with key stakeholders in the system of administration of justice to gauge and enhance mediation services. This has led to an increase in requests and referrals and a more streamlined mediation process. The Director of the Mediation Service made several presentations on resolving workplace disputes to targeted teams across the Organization and conducted various missions overseas, including to Geneva and Addis Ababa for on-site mediation and outreach activities and to Nairobi for outreach and participation in a meeting with the judges and registrars of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal.

13. In December 2010, in partnership with the Office of Human Resources Management and UNDP, the Mediation Service helped to design and execute a conflict management and workplace dispute resolution training programme targeting specific audiences. That initiative was well received by the participants, and further training programmes of this nature are being planned at Headquarters and in the field, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management.

C. Regional impact

Rationale for decentralization

14. By creating a single integrated and geographically decentralized Office for the provision of ombudsman and mediation services, the General Assembly made a critical investment in the informal system as a vital conduit for enhancing individual productivity and promoting organizational health. As envisaged by the panel of experts that reviewed the United Nations internal justice system (the Redesign Panel), the decentralization of services was intended to provide "easier access and quicker response", which would bring "important benefits to the justice system as a whole".[3]

15. The Redesign Panel's rationale for decentralization centred on the notion that the existing ombudsman structures in the Secretariat, funds and programmes and UNHCR had witnessed "a marked increase (to about 75 per cent) in the proportion of cases originating away from Headquarters" and, therefore, "for field staff in particular, decentralization [was] the only viable means of providing effective and timely informal dispute resolution". The Panel also found that, in addition to building synergies by directing employment-related concerns to a single office, decentralization would give the Office of the Ombudsman "a privileged position from which to monitor systemic problems and to recommend solutions". From the perspective of the Panel, "closing gaps of access and avoiding duplication of services [would] benefit all staff and [would] save human and financial resources, especially at the regional level".[4]

Decentralization in practice

16. In 2010 the decentralization of the integrated Office was realized. The regional arm consists of seven regional branches, located in Bangkok, Geneva, Nairobi, Santiago and Vienna and the peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Prior to 2010, the real impact of decentralization could not have been fully observed, and many lessons were learned as a consequence of implementation. Bearing in mind that 2012 marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the first ombudsman function in the Secretariat, the Office began to review its operations, starting with the regional branches, in order to identify key achievements in their first year of operation and challenges that needed to be addressed.

17. Overall, it was determined that the presence of ombudsmen on the ground has provided vital and easy access to staff in the field. It has also helped to develop a wealth of knowledge regarding specific conditions and requirements in the various regions and a deeper understanding of cultural traditions and sensitivities, particularly at the mission level. Furthermore, it has greatly assisted the Office in its outreach and advocacy efforts at the field level.

Achievements

18. The key priority for all branches in their first year of operation was the set-up, staffing and running of an efficient practice that provides in-person intervention to

[3] A/61/205, para. 47.

[4] Ibid., para. 48.

United Nations personnel in the regions for the informal resolution of workplace concerns. This has been accomplished.

19. Direct access for visitors and sustained face-to-face encounters with the regional ombudsmen has paved the way for several breakthroughs in conflict and dispute resolution cases, many of which had festered for long periods of time. It has also allowed the regional ombudsmen to build trust and credibility with their constituencies. The presence of ombudsmen on the ground has further facilitated access to senior managers and human resources personnel and expedited the settlement of workplace-related concerns brought to the attention of the ombudsmen by visitors in their respective areas. Such regular interaction has also encouraged managers to cooperate with the Office and to seek its services for the resolution of workplace disputes. The regional ombudsmen have started to mediate cases and collaborate closely with the Mediation Service in this regard.

Outreach and advocacy in the field

20. The regional ombudsmen were very active in their outreach efforts upon deployment, engaging with all stakeholders early on and promoting awareness of the range of services offered by the integrated Office and the advantages of informal resolution in the settlement of conflict. From their perspective, word of mouth has proved to be a very cost-effective outreach tool. Satisfied visitors are often inclined to discuss their experiences with their peers and encourage them to come forward with their own grievances. The opposite is also true, which is why the establishment of a successful practice based on a solid reputation was paramount among the regional ombudsmen's priorities.

21. In the peacekeeping missions in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, visits to field offices proved very effective, since staff in the remote field often feel disconnected from their headquarters and do not have the same access to the services offered by the Office. Other gaps in access, such as to special political missions, are being examined to identify the best modalities for addressing the problem.

Top three areas of concern in the regional branches

22. The dominant areas of concern reported to the regional branches in 2010 were job and career, interpersonal relationships and performance management. These issues are further explored in the section on systemic issues below.

Balance between workload and resources allocated

23. Paramount among the regional ombudsmen's priorities and concerns has been the need to have the resources required to be fully effective. In addition to on-site requirements, this also involves regular missions in the regions for conflict prevention and resolution and for awareness-raising purposes. Since 2010, the resources allocated to the regional offices have been very limited, with no allocations for missions or professional training.

24. In paragraph 26 of its resolution 65/251, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to take fully into account the balance between the workload of the regional ombudsmen and the resources allocated to them in his future proposed programme budgets". As anticipated, the reporting period was characterized by a

70 per cent increase in cases brought forward by Secretariat personnel alone, owing in large part to the presence of regional ombudsmen on the ground. As more experience is gained, the Office will continue to monitor the balance between the workload of the regional ombudsmen and the resources allocated.

25. Given the likelihood of fluctuation in caseloads and considering the need to ensure that resource allocation is adequate to meet demands, it is suggested that any new travel resources should be centralized; such resources could then be deployed as needed to areas of high demand. This approach would provide operational flexibility, which would allow for maximum use of the resources.

Challenges

26. Efforts by the regional ombudsmen during their first year of operation were met with two types of challenges: administrative and conceptual. The administrative challenges involved budget, access and time constraints. The conceptual challenge lies in promoting a culture of trust and conflict prevention throughout the Organization.

27. The volatile political and security situations in the countries covered by the regional branches in the peacekeeping missions has often hampered their access to staff serving in those areas. Owing to budgetary constraints and the fact that the Office is still operating on its pre-expansion budget in terms of its travel allocations, the ability of the regional ombudsmen to conduct the necessary missions in their respective areas of operation has been limited. Therefore, staff members located outside the duty stations do not enjoy the same access or assistance afforded to those who have direct access to the regional ombudsmen in their areas and who could meet with them face to face to address their concerns. The provision of budgetary resources for travel to remote areas is crucial.

28. It has been found that tangible support among senior-level managers for informal conflict resolution is an incentive for staff to approach the Office and seek intervention. Without such commitment to the process on the part of management, staff members are reluctant to come forward. Experience has also shown that some managers feel limited in their ability to exercise flexibility in the resolution of cases because of either perceived rigidity in the rules and regulations or limitations in their delegated authority.

Lessons learned

29. Conditions in peacekeeping missions, which in some cases involve living and working together in the same compound, create conflicts of a specific nature. Therefore, from the perspective of the ombudsmen in the peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, being on the ground is essential to better understand the complex dynamics and context in which such work-related conflicts appear and provides the most effective means of intervention for informal conflict resolution. In addition to deepening its understanding of the regional context, decentralization has better enabled the Office to identify regions where ombudsman services are most required, particularly in the peacekeeping missions.

30. Parties in conflict tend to resort to the various mechanisms available in the formal and informal components of the internal justice system based on their

perception of what those mechanisms could offer them. Some believe that they would get a resolution more quickly if they pushed conflicts up the hierarchy (hoping that a superior will impose a solution) or that they would attain lucrative financial settlements in the formal system (again hoping for a solution to be imposed), often losing sight of the long-term and sustainable benefits of informal resolution. Getting people to take responsibility for resolving their workplace concerns themselves is a challenge often faced by practitioners in the informal system. Therefore, efforts to promote the informal system, both within the Office of the Ombudsman and beyond, should focus on the importance of early conflict prevention and conflict management. In this context, the regional ombudsmen will continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders both in the field and at Headquarters to promote such an approach.

D. Update regarding implementation of incentives for informal resolution

31. At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly considered a set of incentives intended to encourage recourse to informal resolution,[5] which were prepared by the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services upon request by the Assembly.[6] The proposals, which were formulated on the basis of lessons learned and best practices in similar offices in international organizations, were discussed with the Staff-Management Coordination Committee at its session held in Beirut in June 2010. They included proposals regarding the need to increase awareness of the mandate and activities of the Office and the benefits of informal resolution; encouraging managers to cooperate with the Office and to respond in timely fashion when approached by it; improving access by deploying rapid response teams; amending the Staff Rules regarding the tolling of time limits; building conflict competence; and greater expression of support for informal resolution from the Organization, managers and staff associations.

32. The General Assembly, reaffirming that the informal resolution of conflict is a crucial element of the system of administration of justice, favourably considered the incentives proposed by the Office. In paragraph 22 of its resolution 65/251, the Assembly recalled the recommendations contained in paragraphs 124 to 126 and 128 to 133 of the Secretary-General's report (A/65/303) and requested the Secretary-General to ensure full implementation of those recommendations that were readily implementable and that did not require additional resources or amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, and to include all other recommendations in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

33. The present section provides an update with respect to ongoing efforts to implement the incentives for informal resolution endorsed by the General Assembly. The Office is encouraged that the stakeholders have started to implement the incentives and will continue to work in partnership with all concerned, including on the staff and management sides, to ensure that the incentives are fully implemented.

34. One significant development in this area, building on the Deputy Secretary-General's earlier guidance to senior managers, involves directives sent by the Under-Secretary-General for Management to all heads of departments and offices in

[5] See A/65/303, sect. V.

[6] Resolution 63/253, para. 20.

January 2011. That communication emphasized the important role that the informal component of the justice system plays in the working environment, highlighting the benefits of informal resolution and urging managers to respond immediately to any request from the Office for information, input, etc., and in any event, no later than 30 days after the request is made. The Office is already seeing the impact of this directive in the shorter response time observed in the handling of several cases.

35. A second important development is in the area of conflict competence and building the capacity of staff and managers to deal with conflict situations that arise in the workplace and to make effective use of the informal system. In this context, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services is partnering with the Office of Human Resources Management, among others, to offer dispute resolution training to key partners in the broader system of administration of justice and other interested staff. Bearing in mind the importance of conflict prevention and conflict management in any organizational setting, the integrated Office will continue that partnership to enhance specialized training in conflict management in the various duty stations.

36. Other developments in the implementation of the incentives include the preparation of feedback reports by the United Nations Ombudsman for selected departments in the Secretariat, identifying systemic issues and patterns in their areas. Two of those feedback reports have already been submitted. This practice will be progressively expanded to all departments. Furthermore, the United Nations Ombudsman has been invited by the Deputy Secretary-General to participate in meetings of the Management Performance Board and the Management Committee. Such ongoing collaboration and strong support by the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General for the informal resolution process has yielded positive results: informal resolution is now included as an element of effective leadership in the Secretary-General's compacts with senior managers.

37. With respect to the proposals put forward by the Office for amending the Staff Rules, the General Assembly, in paragraph 23 of its resolution 65/251, requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to submit a proposal to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. In this context, the Office of Human Resources Management is planning to review chapters X and XI of the Staff Rules, on the system of administration of justice, when the amendment of staff rule 11.1 (c) is addressed. Further updates regarding the implementation of the incentives for informal resolution will be provided in future activity reports.

E. Outreach and advocacy

Advocating for a culture of collaboration and conflict prevention

38. In 2010, the integrated Office consolidated its outreach efforts in a number of areas, in the spirit of the General Assembly's direction on informal resolution, including with regard to the need for better access to staff and further reliance on the informal system. The ombudsmen of the Secretariat, funds and programmes and UNHCR continued to coordinate their outreach activities on the basis of common principles that allow for synergies and for concerted promotion of a culture of collaboration and alternative dispute resolution within the United Nations system. While guided by common principles, the various entities tailored their outreach campaigns to the specific needs of their respective constituencies.

Joint communication tools

39. Outreach activities, such as presentations, meetings, training workshops, videoteleconferences and missions, constitute an important component of the work of the Office and formed a platform on which to explain the whole range of services the Ombudsman can provide, including the coaching role. They are also aimed at providing employees with conflict management skills through training that will help them to prevent conflict and to address badly managed conflict early and effectively.

40. A key component of joint outreach activities is the website, which serves as a gateway to information in all six official languages about the Office and the services it delivers. The Office initiated contact with all field operations to inform them about the website and how to ensure web access to the Office Intranet.

41. To enhance the visibility of the Office, a poster highlighting the key principles of informal resolution was distributed to offices at Headquarters and in the field. Several requests for additional materials were made for further distribution to field offices. Other communication tools prepared jointly by the Secretariat, funds and programmes and UNHCR include presentations and articles for United Nations Intranets regarding the Office and the benefits of informal resolution.

Outreach to field-based staff and duty stations outside Headquarters

42. The ability to provide in-person intervention to staff located outside Headquarters increased significantly in 2010 through the presence of the regional branches. Outreach efforts gained new momentum by focusing on a variety of activities in each region, including meetings with staff, senior management, staff representatives and other key stakeholders. Outreach travel to field missions and established duty stations, in conjunction with the provision of ombudsman services, was also carried out to the extent permitted by budget constraints.

43. In the Secretariat, field missions conducted for in-person intervention to resolve disputes were also used to promote awareness of informal conflict resolution. These consisted of meetings with senior management and staff representation bodies, as well as town hall meetings to raise awareness of the mandate and activities of the Office. Travelling delegations also handled individual cases for the settlement of workplace concerns. It should be noted that special efforts were made to reach out to national staff. Such missions, which were undertaken to the extent permitted by budget constraints under the peacekeeping support account, included those to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

44. Efforts in the peacekeeping area also included participation in videoconferences with senior managers in field operations, including UNTSO and MINURSO. Missions carried out under the regular budget have included those to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa.

45. In 2010, the Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes conducted five field missions in four regions. The UNHCR Ombudsman's Office conducted field

missions in conjunction with Respectful Workplace Adviser workshops in Eastern Europe and Southern Africa.

Outreach to senior management and other stakeholder groups

46. During the reporting period, special outreach efforts focused on highlighting to key stakeholders the added organizational value of informal conflict resolution. The United Nations Ombudsman moderated a session during the Secretary-General's 2010 senior management retreat on how to build trust between staff and management through institutional reforms. The United Nations Ombudsman also participated in meetings of the Management Performance Board, the Management Committee, the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (Beirut, June 2010) and several senior management team meetings at the departmental level. Such efforts increased the awareness of senior managers regarding the benefits of informal resolution and garnered further commitment to the informal process. This was evidenced by the greater number of cases referred to the Office by senior managers.

47. In the context of joint efforts to enhance cooperation with external stakeholders and to exchange best practices, the ombudsmen in the Secretariat and the funds and programmes participated in the annual meeting of the International Ombudsman Association held in New Orleans, United States of America, in April 2010 and, together with the UNHCR Ombudsman, in the meeting of the ombudsmen and mediators of the United Nations system and related international organizations held in Paris in September 2010.

48. The Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes participated in three UNDP regional-cluster meetings, where they met with management and staff representatives. The Ombudsmen were also invited to give a presentation to 300 managers assembled at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) annual global meeting. Additionally, the Ombudsmen addressed United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) security advisers and gave presentations to the UNICEF Division of Information Technology Solutions and Services in their transformative mediation skills workshop. The Ombudsmen also welcomed the opportunity to address newly recruited resident coordinators at the leadership and management-training workshop held in New York.

49. As part of its outreach activities, in 2010 the UNHCR Ombudsman's Office continued to expand its network of Respectful Workplace Advisers. The objective is to prevent or reduce the intensity of conflicts by addressing them promptly and at their source, while ensuring that relevant information is available regarding avenues through which interested individuals can seek advice and assistance or register a complaint. The Respectful Workplace Adviser programme is based on a model developed by the World Bank and involves (a) the nomination and selection, through a confidential voting system, of trusted colleagues as Respectful Workplace Advisers; (b) a workshop; and (c) subsequent back-up support provided by the UNHCR Ombudsman's Office. The Respectful Workplace Advisers share an issue report every four months with the UNHCR Ombudsman's Office.

Conflict resolution day

50. On 21 October 2010, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services celebrated conflict resolution day with staff from the Secretariat and the funds and programmes. Open houses were held in Nairobi and Santiago to

promote the use of informal conflict resolution and to give the various stakeholders involved in the resolution of workplace disputes an insight into the work of the Office and an opportunity to meet and greet the staff. The regional branch in Nairobi marked the event by presenting a series of short, inspirational video clips illustrating instances where the theory underlying conflict resolution was applied in schools, in the workplace and on the global stage. The feedback received indicated that the videos allowed participants to view their interactions both at the workplace and at home from a different perspective. The office in Santiago, serving Latin America and the Caribbean, also held an open-door day, which was well attended by staff in the region. In welcoming this initiative, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that, thanks to the work of the regional Ombudsman, the organization was better equipped to address and resolve work-related differences for the benefit of all. The Office is planning to celebrate conflict resolution day on an annual basis.

Building conflict competence

51. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services partnered with the Office of Human Resources Management and UNDP to offer a conflict management and workplace dispute resolution training programme to key partners in the broader administration of justice system and other interested staff. Nearly 100 staff from the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNFPA and the World Food Programme (WFP) participated in that successful training event. The feedback was positive. One participant, after learning about the various tools of informal dispute resolution and in particular about the mediation services offered by the Ombudsman's Office, commented, "I did not realize that mediation has such power in transforming a seemingly intractable conflict". Another said, "We should expose staff at large to this valuable process and make more use of it as managers".

52. In July 2010, UNHCR conducted a workshop for Respectful Workplace Advisers for selected staff from countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and in October 2010, jointly with WFP, a similar workshop was held for staff from countries in Southern Africa. The purpose of the workshops was to prepare staff in the field for a possible volunteer role as Respectful Workplace Advisers. In 2009, a Respectful Workplace Adviser workshop was conducted jointly with WFP for staff from countries in East Africa, following a pilot training event in West Africa in 2007. UNHCR now has 48 active Respectful Workplace Advisers operating in 31 countries. The Respectful Workplace Adviser workshops are conducted by the UNHCR Global Learning Centre while the UNHCR Ombudsman's Office and, where applicable, WFP Ombudsman's Office participate in the delivery of the training.

53. In 2010 UNHCR also took the initiative of addressing conflict management through a newly developed learning concept, namely, the Conflict Management Programme, which is to be piloted in 2011. The Programme is aimed at changing how staff deal with workplace conflicts. In addition, managers will receive special training on mediation in workplace conflicts. Starting in 2011, mediation training will also be a part of new representatives' training. The Conflict Management Programme and the representatives' training are run by the UNHCR Global Learning Centre.

54. The funds and programmes intend to re-examine the potential of the RWA programme, for which a number of pilot programmes were launched in the past, including with UNICEF. As a first resource for staff facing conflict in the country offices, the Respectful Workplace Adviser programme has proved to be useful. Cooperation with the World Bank, WFP and UNHCR will also be strengthened. In addition, the Office plans to examine UNHCR experience to offer mediation training to selected staff.

55. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services is currently working on a targeted communications strategy that would build on the progress achieved in the areas of promoting informal conflict resolution, encouraging and facilitating recourse to informal resolution by senior managers and other important stakeholders and advocating a culture of collaboration and conflict prevention. In this context, several activities will be designed for the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the ombudsman function in the United Nations, in 2012.

II. Systemic issues

A. Source and context

Issue identification and reporting

56. In paragraph 21 of its resolution 65/251, the General Assembly recalled paragraph 11 of resolution 64/233, in which it emphasized the role of the Ombudsman as a vehicle for reporting on broad systemic issues that he or she identifies, as well as issues that are brought to his or her attention, in order to promote greater harmony in the workplace. In paragraph 12 of resolution 64/233, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report regularly on actions taken to address the findings of the Ombudsman on systemic issues.

57. Although the high percentage of cases relating to a particular issue is a strong indicator that a systemic problem exists, there are issues that are directly identified by the Ombudsman that are systemic in nature and that have the potential for systemic impact. In identifying the systemic issues for inclusion in its annual report, the Office tries to maintain a balance between systemic issues that are characterized by case volume and other issues that may not yet produce such volume, but that are nevertheless noted as problematic and can worsen if not properly addressed.

B. Systemic issues identified during the reporting period in the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

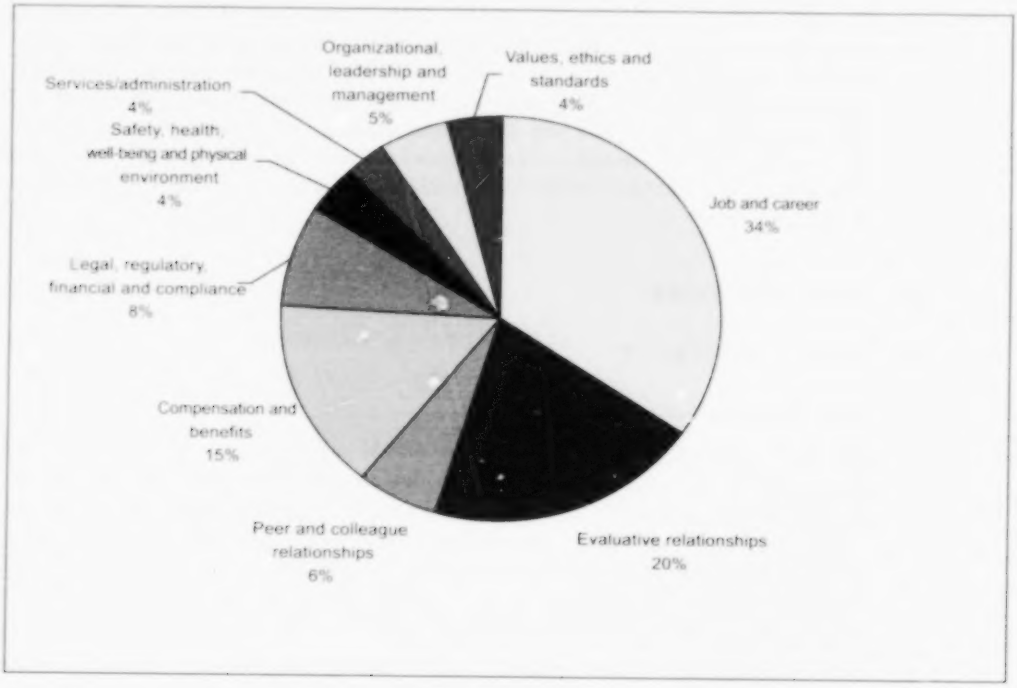
58. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services uses the issue categories defined by the International Ombudsman Association.[7] In 2010, as

[7] The categories are: job and career; evaluative relationships; compensation and benefits; legal, regulatory, financial and compliance; safety, health, well-being and environment; values, ethics and standards; peer and colleague relationships; organizational, leadership and management; and services and administration.

in 2009, the categories in which the most cases were brought to the attention of the integrated Office were job and career, evaluative (supervisory) relationships, compensation and benefits, and legal, regulatory, financial and compliance issues.

Figure I

Issues by category across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services


Organizational, leadership and management 5%
Values, ethics and standards 4%
Services/administration 4%
Safety, health, well-being and physical environment 4%
Job and career 34%
Legal, regulatory, financial and compliance 8%
Compensation and benefits 15%
Peer and colleague relationships 6%
Evaluative relationships 20%

1. Job and career

59. During the reporting period, 34 per cent of the issues brought to the attention of the integrated Office pertained to job and career issues.[8] Such concerns have been dominant for the past three years. They were also among the top concerns at the field level, as reported by the regional ombudsmen.

60. In the Secretariat, frustration over lack of career development and distrust of the selection process has been a continuous concern. One important element may be a discrepancy between the expectations of staff, who see promotion as a career satisfier, on the one hand, and the ability of the Organization, on the other hand, to meet those expectations in a changing economic environment and a changing peacekeeping landscape. In this context, there are a number of measures the Organization could take to enhance the work experience and thus the motivation of staff within existing means, so that the focus on promotion does not become the

[8] This category includes selection and recruitment, post classification, contractual arrangements, career development, assignment, loan/secondment/transfer, non-renewal of contract and termination.

default perspective from which staff view their careers. This would involve a change from a perspective that is focused on success expressed in promotions to a focus on job satisfaction through challenging assignments, career mapping and a sense of purpose and contribution. This approach would require more active engagement by managers with regard to the job satisfaction and work assignments of their staff.

61. The excessive use of temporary contracts in some regions, which are not issued to complete specific projects but rather to carry out regular functions, created a very precarious situation for many individuals who were informed about the eventual renewal of their contracts only at very short notice.

62. Gender discrimination was reported in peacekeeping missions by female visitors who complained of discrimination in recruitment processes, working relationships and matters of professional advancement. More broadly, in the Secretariat, female visitors also brought forward cases involving sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

63. In the funds and programmes, concerns pertaining to job and career-related issues manifested themselves differently depending on the category of staff. For example, significantly more national Professional and support service staff complained about job application and selection processes than did international Professional staff. This might indicate a need to provide greater opportunities for career progression to staff at the national Professional and support service levels, since they do not usually receive as many opportunities for exposure and career advancement as their international colleagues. Another distinction in this category is that more female than male staff came to the Office with concerns about career progression and opportunities.

64. At UNHCR, concerns about job application and selection and recruitment processes and non-renewal of contracts were raised frequently, with career progression and opportunities the third most frequent concern. It was noted that career-progression concerns were more frequently brought up by women than men. Problems relating to non-renewal of contracts were almost exclusively raised by categories other than international Professional staff.

Managed reassignment between missions

65. It has come to the attention of the Office that a number of staff have served in the same mission for years, including at hardship duty stations, with no career prospects or opportunities for growth or change, including lateral transfers. A roster system has now been established for the missions, which is expected to help address these types of concerns more effectively.

Eligibility of temporary staff

66. Cases brought to the United Nations Ombudsman involved different interpretations in the application of the rules designed to allow temporary staff with external status to apply for posts at any level that they feel they can reasonably compete for. Since the rule governing these cases is clearly worded,[9] the systemic

[9] The rules do not suspend the rules governing the G-to-P process, although this was argued by some staff. The Office of Human Resources Management will provide clarification in the relevant instruction at the next opportunity.

issue that these cases illustrate is not one of policy but of inconsistency in the application of the rules.

Recommendations

1. Human resources personnel and managers should communicate to staff at all levels information about realistic career prospects, the facts of the post pyramid, the average number of promotions for a staff member and the impact of downsizing peacekeeping missions. Managers should provide constructive but honest feedback to staff under their supervision in general and identify opportunities to promote job satisfaction. Also, staff members not selected for posts would benefit from feedback, which managers should provide if requested.

2. Staff participation is already foreseen as part of the process in the downsizing of peacekeeping missions. Managers should ensure that relevant procedures are adhered to and, where possible, strengthened through communication by managers at all levels so that staff can understand the direction and decisions taken and are enabled to make informed decisions about their future at the earliest possible time.

3. A reorientation of expectations should be undertaken to change the perception that promotion is the only avenue for a satisfactory career. Contributions at all levels should be valued, and emphasis should be placed on job satisfaction. Such a reorientation should be institutionally supported through appropriate mechanisms such as a periodic review of staff members' careers and assignments by the heads of departments in cross-departmental meetings. Such a review should focus in particular on staff members who have been in their posts for an extended period of time.

4. Managed reassignment between missions should be introduced to complement the current selection mechanism for the placement of staff in order both to avoid undue hardship and to prevent careers from going stale. The possibility of expanding the voluntary initiative for network exchanges (VINES) programme should be explored, and effective implementation of the envisaged mobility policy should be ensured.

2. Evaluative and peer and colleague relationships

67. Twenty per cent of the issues brought to the attention of integrated Office in 2010 were related to evaluative relationships, comprising 19 per cent of the cases in the Secretariat, 21 per cent in the funds and programmes and 26 per cent in UNHCR. Concerns pertaining to respectful treatment constituted the most frequent sub-issue.

Performance evaluation process

68. Providing and receiving constructive feedback in a diverse multicultural environment is a difficult and complex undertaking. The cases brought to the Ombudsman reveal weaknesses in the ability of both staff and managers to do so. Conflicts also stem from differences in the perceptions and expectations regarding the role of the manager. In most cases received throughout the integrated Office, supervisees expected a more democratic, participatory style of management, while

managers relied on more directional styles of management, often citing the need to get things done. This source of conflict is not limited to the performance evaluation process, although it is often triggered by it. Managers have sought help from the Office of the Ombudsman in dealing with staff they see as difficult, while staff who come to the Office wish to address the need to be heard or appreciated more by their managers.

Harassment and abuse of authority

69. Difficulties in interactions between supervisors and supervisees have led to complaints of harassment and abuse of authority by staff who saw no other way for their concerns to be addressed. During mission visits, this trend was also drawn to the attention of the United Nations Ombudsman by the Conduct and Discipline Units that had received complaints of this nature. Many of the complaints had festered for a long time, escalating to formal complaints, which could have been avoided through a more skilful handling of the situation by all concerned.

Mainstreaming conflict resolution skills and trust-building

70. Continued efforts are needed throughout the Organization to improve performance management skills and to mainstream conflict resolution skills as a managerial and staff competency. The latter would involve trust-building as an essential element.

71. The Office is gratified to note that the Secretary-General, on the advice of the United Nations Ombudsman, has incorporated conflict resolution skills into his compact with senior managers as one of the expected elements of leadership. It is hoped that this will have a trickle-down effect on all managers, supervisors and staff. In addition, increased training efforts on conflict resolution skills at all levels are a welcome systemic response.

72. In addition, and in the context of a review of organizational competencies by the Office of Human Resources Management, the United Nations Ombudsman proposed the incorporation of conflict resolution skills into the competencies required of all staff. The proposal was well received.

Respectful treatment

73. Respect for diversity is one of the core values of the United Nations, and all staff members are expected to express this core value in their day-to-day work. Regrettably, this is not always evidenced. Lack of respect and the resulting lack of trust are consistent triggers of conflict in any context. It has been noted that such situations often occur in missions and affect national staff in particular. Efforts are needed on the part of all concerned to ensure that this situation receives the attention it deserves.

Recommendations

1. Efforts should be increased to upgrade performance management skills throughout the Organization, including in missions, with the understanding that the evaluation process and attendant continuous dialogue are a shared responsibility for staff and managers.

2. Heads of departments and missions should be directly involved in the performance management of their staff in their respective areas of responsibility.

3. The Conduct and Discipline Units and the Office of Internal Oversight Services should highlight to managers and other appropriate officials lessons learned from complaints that may be more managerial than disciplinary in nature. Such lessons learned should be reviewed by the Management Performance Board and incorporated into leadership and managerial training programmes.

4. Ongoing efforts to mainstream conflict resolution skills throughout the Organization should continue, through training and by holding staff accountable through the evaluation mechanisms, following the example set by the Secretary-General and the Management Performance Board for senior managers.

5. Senior managers, including in the missions, should be required to set the tone for the respectful treatment of all staff and regularly reinforce that message in senior management meetings and other appropriate forums.

3. Compensation and benefits/services and administration

74. Fifteen per cent of the issues across the integrated Office in 2010 related to compensation and benefits, representing 16 per cent of cases from the Secretariat, 17 per cent from the funds and programmes and 10 per cent from UNHCR.

75. These two categories are dealt with together, as many compensation and benefits issues turned out to be as much about the way the benefits were administered and staff were treated in the process as about the benefits themselves.

Information and advice on entitlements to staff, responsiveness to queries

76. The interpretation and application of the rules does not always appear to be uniform across the system. A contributing factor may be the significant number of changes introduced through previous and ongoing reform processes and the many attendant changes in the conditions of service.

77. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services acknowledges that all relevant information is available to staff via the Intranet. In this connection, recent efforts to reorganize information on the Intranet (iSeek) to make it more accessible to users are deemed excellent by the Ombudsman. It has been noted that increased efforts for communication have been made centrally at the policymaking levels. However, there appears to be a need to better match existing information resources with effective delivery in order to allow for more effective application and communication of guidelines to staff.

Timely information to staff on changes in variable benefits

78. It was brought to the attention of the Office that changes in the rest and recuperation cycles were communicated in some cases after they had come into effect and with varying implementation dates. This made it difficult for the staff concerned to plan ahead. The Office of Human Resources Management is taking steps to address these types of situations.

Special post allowance

79. Special post allowance (SPA) is a payment to compensate for work performed at a level higher than the personal grade of the staff member. However, under the rules, its payment is discretionary, which does not guarantee equal pay for equal work, according to some visitors. The procedures for granting this allowance also involve a number of steps, which some perceive to be unnecessarily cumbersome and outdated, given that temporary assignments to a higher level are now granted only following a competitive selection process, which was not the case when the SPA rules were formulated.

Dependency benefits

80. The Office of the Ombudsman has raised with the Office of Human Resources Management concerns from separated or divorced staff members regarding which of the parents should receive the benefits for their dependent children. The Office is pleased to note that this issue will be addressed in the next issuance of the relevant administrative instruction.

Recommendations

1. The mechanisms by which staff are informed of their conditions of service should be reviewed, streamlined, standardized and strengthened at all stages of their career, namely: during the on-boarding process; during induction sessions relating to their conditions of service; when changes occur in their conditions of service throughout their careers; and at the time of separation. It should be noted that the provision of information via print or electronic media is not a substitute for, nor is it as effective as, interactive communication with the staff members concerned in a setting where they can ask questions and have their concerns addressed immediately.

2. It should be ensured that human resources and administrative staff concerned at all duty stations, including missions, are sufficiently informed and trained in the application of the rules and in client orientation to ensure consistent application of the rules in a way that makes the staff feel properly treated.

3. Guidelines for the time taken to respond to staff enquiries and other standards of client orientation should be considered.

4. Improvement in the communication of information on rest and recuperation cycles has been noted by the Office. It is important, however, to ensure that any changes in entitlements are communicated to the staff members concerned in a timely manner.

5. The special post allowance process should be reviewed with a view to streamlining its implementation and abolishing SPA panels.

4. Legal, regulatory, financial and compliance

81. In accordance with the guidelines and categories of issues established by the International Ombudsman Association, which the Office applies in its reporting, questions in this category pertain to financial, legal and disciplinary issues, which include harassment, waste, fraud, abuse of funds and investigative or disciplinary

processes. During the reporting period, 8 per cent of the issues brought to the attention of the Office were in this category, with harassment (not including sexual harassment) being the most frequent source of concern. The percentage of this type of issue was slightly higher in 2009 (10 per cent). The Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes reported that 80 per cent of the cases that came to their Office cited the other party in the conflict as either a senior manager or a direct supervisor. In the Secretariat and UNHCR, legal, regulatory, financial and compliance issues accounted for 11 and 8 per cent of cases, respectively.

Delays in investigations in possible disciplinary matters: update

82. The question of delays in investigations was addressed in the Secretary-General's last report (A/65/303); it continued to be raised as a due-process issue in 2010, and also in terms of its effect on the career development and contractual status of the staff concerned. Accordingly, the Office welcomes efforts by the Administration and the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the highest levels to address this matter. A full review has been conducted, initially under the auspices of the Deputy Secretary-General and later by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, resulting in proposals for remedying the situation in the context of an update of the current disciplinary procedures. Such an integrated approach to the issue promises to address the matter at the systemic level.

83. Although the specific cases handled are disciplinary in nature, the systemic issue is one of capacity to investigate promptly and effectively. In addition, many cases that were brought forward as harassment or abuse-of-authority complaints could have escalated unnecessarily because they were not properly handled by the parties concerned. Therefore, efforts to strengthen performance management and conflict resolution skills system-wide may help to reduce the frequency of this problem.

5. Organizational, leadership and management

84. Five per cent of the issues brought to the attention of the Office were related to organizational, leadership and management matters, representing 8 per cent of cases in UNHCR, 8 per cent in the funds and programmes and 4 per cent in the Secretariat. Questions in this category have to do with, inter alia, the organizational climate and change management, as well as leadership in the organization and management styles.

Strengthening a culture of informal conflict resolution

85. Directives from senior management to all heads of offices and departments encouraging recourse and better responsiveness to informal resolution have been largely effective in further engaging managers and administrators in the process. It will be critical to pursue such efforts and to secure a more focused and sustained engagement on the part of all concerned in order to make the informal process even more effective. Experience has shown that where parties are constructively engaged early on, positive results can be achieved, creating further trust in informal conflict resolution and shifting the culture from one of confrontation to one of dialogue and mutual problem-solving.

Change management

86. Generally, reforms that help the Organization to keep up with the times, fulfil its mandate and remain a competitive and attractive employer are welcomed by both staff and management. However, the succession of various reforms over the last decade, some of which have required staff to do more without additional resources, appears to have left both staff and management reform-weary. A particular difficulty that the Office has discerned is in the conceptualization and implementation of such reform initiatives, that is to say, how the need for change is determined and later communicated to the various constituencies; the extent to which staff are involved in change management initiatives to ensure their acceptance of, and commitment to, such processes; and whether the necessary resources and training mechanisms are available or will be made available to make reform sustainable.

Recommendations

Issues of change management and organizational managerial culture, including accountability, should be taken up at the highest level, such as the Management Performance Board. Change requires a communication strategy and the participation of staff in decision-making to ensure their buy-in and engagement in the process. Every effort should be made to see how such participation could be strengthened. Most importantly, any reform should be planned with due regard to implementation and the provision of the necessary resources and support for the transitional periods. The most recent reform initiative may be an excellent opportunity to approach ongoing and further reforms with the above in mind.

6. Safety, health, well-being, stress and work/life

87. Issues relating to (a) safety, health, well-being, stress and work/life, (b) values, ethics and standards and (c) services and administration amounted to 4 per cent of the overall issues across the integrated Office.

Handling of emergencies and crises as they affect staff: update and new issue

88. One of the core functions of the United Nations is to help others in crisis. Unfortunately, with targeted attacks on United Nations personnel and large-scale natural catastrophes also affecting large numbers of employees, it has become necessary for the Organization to devise action plans and special measures to address the needs of staff in the aftermath of such events. The Office of the Ombudsman has been engaged with this issue for some time. It welcomed the establishment of the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team in the Office of Human Resources Management as a first step. The Office further welcomes the increased attention and support provided to that Team.[10] The Office of the Ombudsman also salutes the considerable efforts devoted to the compilation of lessons learned by the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support. The Office of the Ombudsman will work with the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team in sharing systemic trends and patterns identified following emergency situations and best practices derived from its experience in this area.

[10] See the recommendations and updates in A/62/311, A/64/314 and A/65/303.

89. Another concern is the effective implementation of special post-crisis measures and the need to examine such measures or exceptions in crisis situations with a view to enhancing the Organization's ability to implement them before communicating them. In this context, the Office of the Ombudsman is working with all stakeholders — individual staff members, staff unions, management and administration — to resolve outstanding issues.

Health and safety issues

90. Cases involving medical issues, particularly from the field, revealed that most concerns are linked to health and safety policy issues, which signals the need for a comprehensive health and safety policy for all United Nations staff. The Office notes that one of the recommendations made by the United Nations Medical Directors Working Group is for the adoption of an occupational safety and health policy. The Office welcomes that recommendation and believes that any such policy must also take into account the correlation between poorly managed conflict and the potential for adverse health consequences.

91. For example, absenteeism is one of the issues often brought to the attention of the Ombudsman, specifically, the tendency for staff members who may be experiencing higher than normal levels of stress owing to work-related conflicts to go on extended sick leave. When they return to work they often find, far from an improved work environment, that the situation deteriorates further, bringing additional impacts on colleagues who may have been sympathetic before the leave period but who subsequently became resentful because they had to take on all or part of the additional work created by the absence. Absenteeism, therefore, as an aspect of workplace conflict, is an issue that should be addressed in its entirety given its potential impact on productivity and morale.

92. Visitors to the integrated Office also expressed concerns regarding the procedures governing the selection of doctors for the medical boards tasked with the review of complaints. In accordance with current guidelines, the administration selects one doctor and the staff member another; those two doctors then need to agree on a third. The two selected doctors sometimes fail to reach an agreement on a third, resulting in a delay that can last a long time. In reviewing such cases, the Office noted that the Medical Board and the Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, among others, are vestiges of the old system and do not have a mechanism for informal dispute resolution. In the new system of administration of justice, where emphasis is placed on informal dispute resolution, there may be a need to revisit the policy and procedures for the workings of such boards.

Recommendations

1. In devising special measures for staff affected by crisis, due regard should be given to effective implementation so that the proposed measures actually alleviate the problem they are intended to address. To this end, the development of templates and measures for potential scenarios without the pressure of an actual crisis may be useful. Improved cooperation in this area between the Department of Management, the Office of Human Resources Management, medical services, and the Department of Field Support, both at Headquarters and in field operations, is encouraging and deserves recognition. It should also be mentioned that, subsequently, a significant number of special

measures that were extremely helpful to the staff concerned were implemented without the sort of difficulties and resulting cases mentioned above.

2. Staff should feel free to bring up their concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman and be respected if they do so. Staff should not be concerned that when they approach the Ombudsman's Office or when they enter the formal complaint mechanism they will face retaliation or reprisal or that they will be ostracized or acquire a bad reputation.

3. A comprehensive occupational health and safety policy should be established. It should take into account the potential for adverse health consequences of poorly managed conflicts.

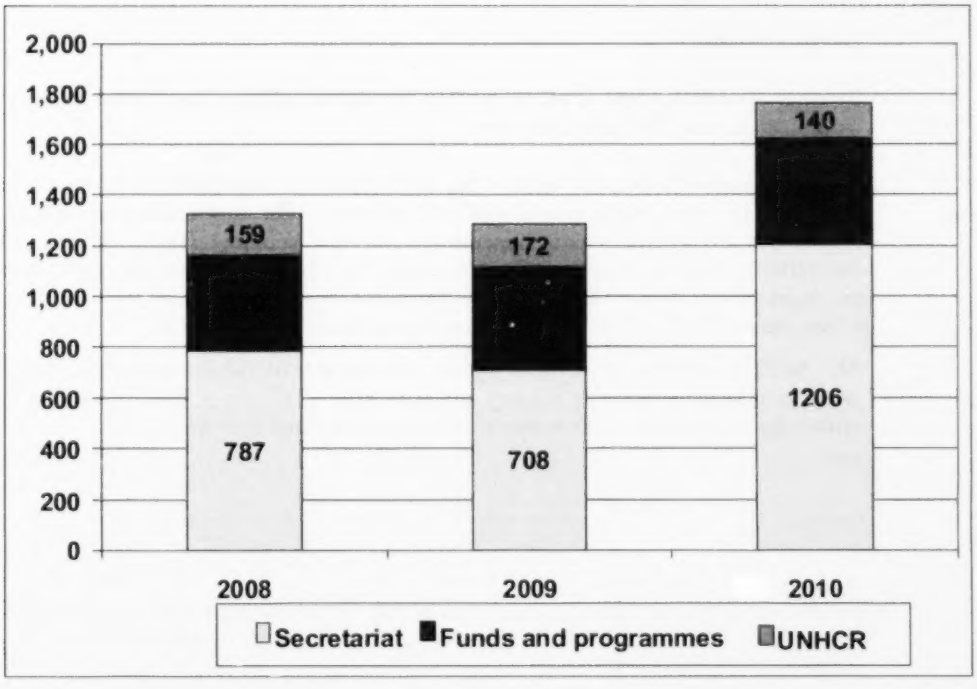
4. The guidelines pertaining to the review of cases by the Medical Board should be revised to include, among other things, the possibility of informal dispute resolution.

III. Statistical information: ombudsman services

A. Case volume

93. In 2010, the integrated Office registered a 35 per cent increase in its caseload, with a total of 1,764 cases in 2010 compared to 1,287 in 2009.

Figure II
Number of cases opened across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2008-2010



94. In the Secretariat, there was a higher demand for services during the reporting period, and the case volume increased by 70 per cent between 2009 and 2010. The regional branches opened a total of 725 cases in 2010, which was also a factor in the sizeable increase. Staff of the integrated Office continued to work beyond the call of duty to meet the demand and to ensure quality in service delivery despite the challenges posed by such an increase. It should be noted that the level of complexity tends to vary greatly from one case to another. Visitors frequently bring forward one case with multiple issues that may involve different policies and practices, which could require interaction with different stakeholders. For example, a visitor may approach the Office regarding non-selection for a post, which might also have an impact on performance evaluation, contractual status, entitlements, benefits, etc.

95. Cases are registered according to the number of visitors and not the number of issues they raise. The time taken for resolution, depending on the complexity of the issues raised, generally ranges from two weeks to three months. This involves multiple sessions with each visitor and several contacts with relevant stakeholders on behalf of the visitor, including shuttle mediation, to discuss the various aspects of each matter and reach a mutually agreeable solution.

96. The Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes opened 418 cases in 2010.[11] During the first half of the year, pending the arrival of the new Ombudsmen, the total number of visitors remained stable owing to the reduced capacity to address cases. The caseload increased significantly in the second half of the year following the arrival of the Ombudsmen.

97. The UNHCR Ombudsman received 140 visitors in 2010, slightly fewer than in 2009. In addition, the UNHCR Respectful Workplace Adviser network, which was expanded at the end of 2009 and in 2010, received 65 visitors, who raised 87 issues.

B. Demographics

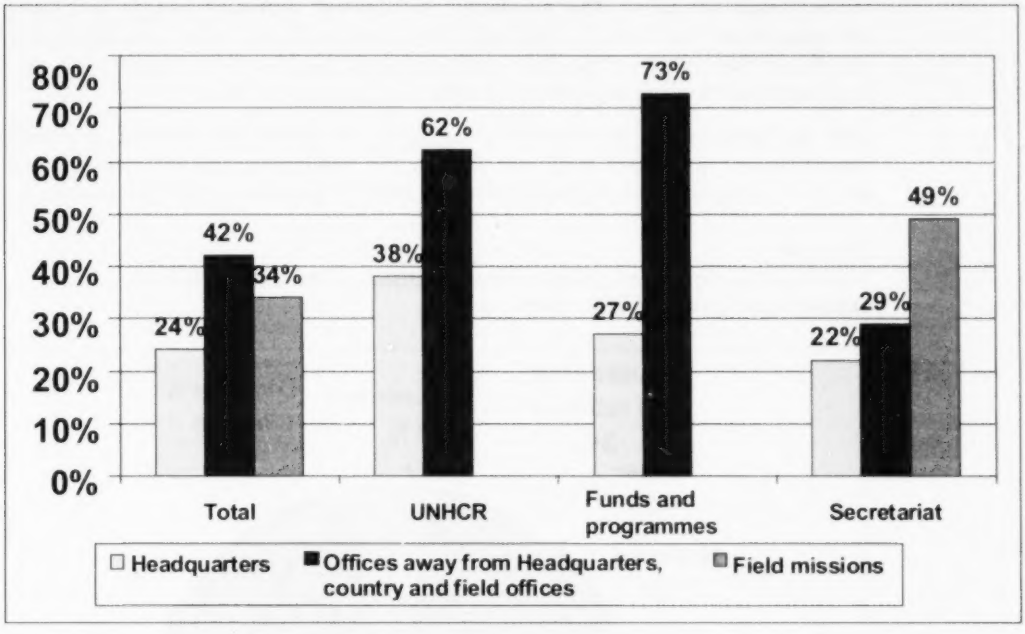
Number of cases by type of office location across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

98. The types of office locations in the Secretariat are Headquarters in New York, offices away from Headquarters and field missions. For funds and programmes, office types are headquarters in Copenhagen and New York and country offices, and for UNHCR they are headquarters in Geneva, the Budapest Global Service Centre and field offices. Figure III shows how the breakdown of visitors by type of office varies among the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and UNHCR.

99. In 2010, as in the previous two years, the majority of visitors worked in offices away from headquarters and country and field offices. However, the distribution of visitors by location varies from one sector to the other and over time.

[11] The Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes and the Ombudsman for UNHCR issue separate annual reports, which are available on the website of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services.

Figure III
Cases by type of office location across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services and in the different entities, 2010



100. The proportion of cases from field missions (which are part of the Secretariat only) increased from 24 per cent in 2009 to 34 per cent in 2010. The share of cases from this category of personnel could increase further in the future, as 60 per cent of Secretariat staff serve in field missions.

101. In the funds and programmes, 73 per cent of the cases addressed during the reporting period were from country offices and 27 per cent from headquarters locations. This is consistent with results from previous years and reflects the field-oriented nature of the organizations.

102. As was the case in 2009, 38 per cent of visitors from UNHCR came from headquarters locations and 62 per cent from offices in the field. This information suggests that the reversion of the pattern observed prior to 2008 has stabilized, which can be attributed to a greater awareness of the role and the function of the Office of the Ombudsman as a result of field missions and, in particular, following a further expansion of the Respectful Workplace Adviser network, jointly with WFP.

Occupational groups across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

103. Since 2008, the largest occupational group of visitors to UNOMS has been staff in the Professional category (44 per cent), followed by support staff (19 per cent, compared to 26 per cent in 2008 and 2009).

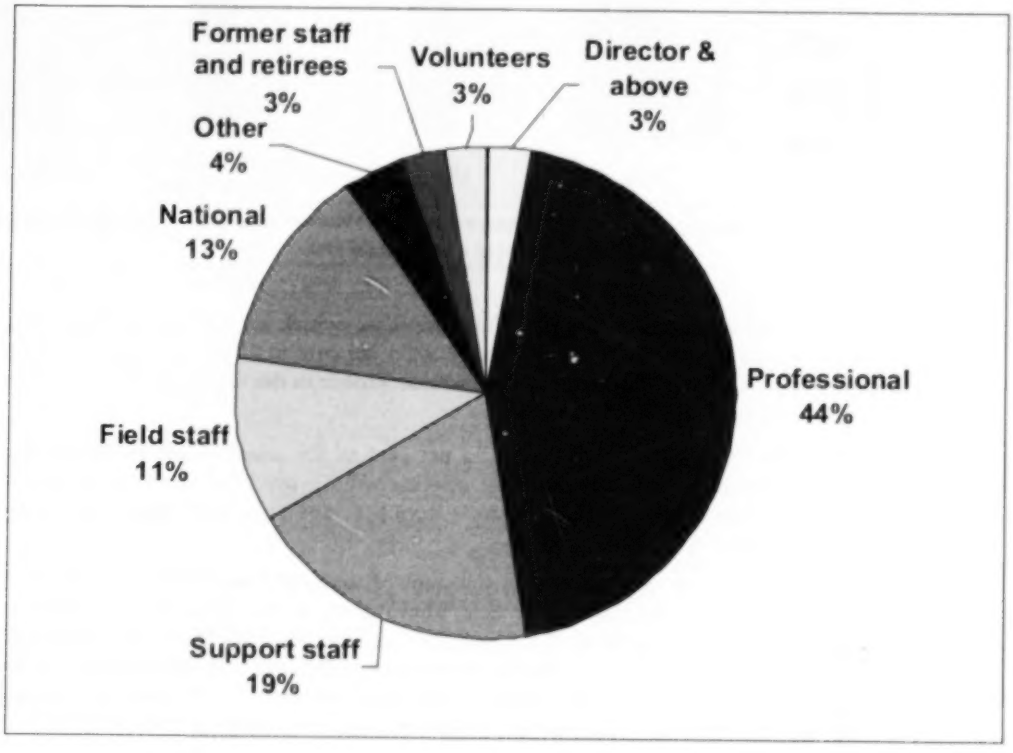
104. Only the Secretariat has a specific occupational group of field staff, which consists of international support staff working exclusively in field missions

(peacekeeping and special political missions). Field staff constituted 11 per cent of the total number of Secretariat visitors.

105. The proportion of visitors from occupational groups deployed outside Headquarters increased. The percentage of national staff who sought assistance increased from 7 per cent in 2008 and 2009 to 13 per cent in 2010. The percentage of visitors belonging to the field staff category, specific to the Secretariat, also increased from 8 per cent in 2008 and 2009 to 11 per cent in 2010.

106. The proportions of visitors belonging to the remaining three occupational categories — (a) former staff and retirees, (b) volunteers and (c) Director and above — remained stable between 2008 and 2010, at approximately 3 per cent each.

Figure IV
Visitors by occupational group across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services



107. In the Secretariat, 41 per cent of visitors belonged to the Professional category and 17 per cent of cases were initiated by support staff.

108. In the funds and programmes, as in the past, visitors in majority of cases (54 per cent) were staff from the Professional and higher categories. In the General Service category, more female (56 per cent) than male visitors contacted the Office.

109. In UNHCR, two thirds of the visitors came from the Professional category, representing a small pro rata increase compared to the year before. The number of support staff visiting the Ombudsman's Office decreased somewhat, but the decrease was more than offset (although not included in the statistics) by the number of staff visiting the Respectful Workplace Advisers. The number of senior-level personnel (P-5 and above) contacting the Ombudsman's Office for advice, either about their own concerns or their concerns as managers, remained at just over 10 per cent.

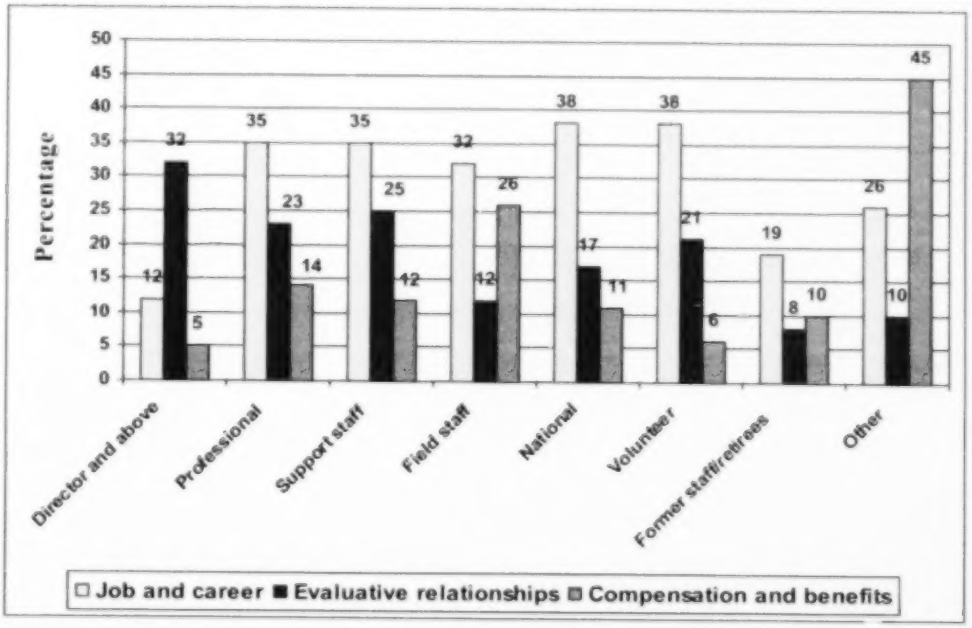
C. Issue distribution by occupational group

110. The overall distribution of issues varies from one occupational group to another. However, some groups share similarities. For instance, the distribution of the three main types of issues is the same among Professionals, support staff, national staff and volunteers, with job and career issues being the most prevalent, followed by evaluative relationships and compensation and benefits.

111. Visitors from the field staff category, specific to the Secretariat, displayed a slightly different distribution: job and career constituted their main category, compensation and benefits came second and evaluative relationships third. The Director and above category shows a particular pattern: for this group, evaluative relationships are the primary type of issue, followed by job and career and compensation and benefits. The main issue for staff in the "other" category is compensation and benefits.

Figure V

Types of issues by occupational group of visitors across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services



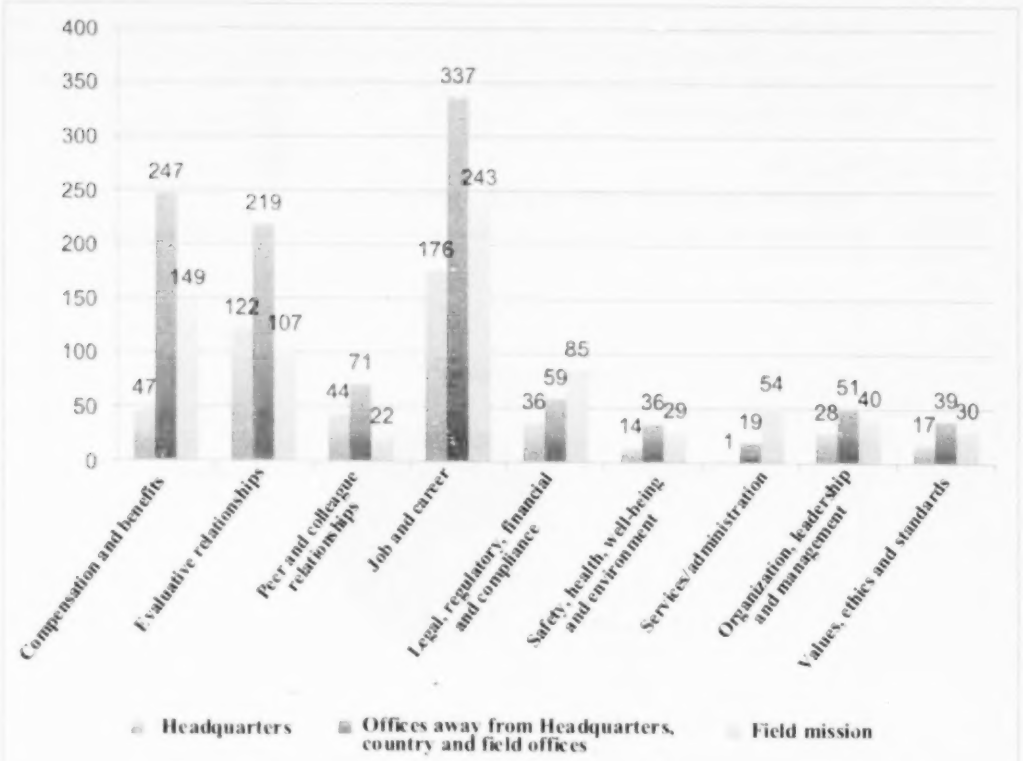
112. Conflict concerning workplace relationships is the second most frequent issue that brings staff to the Office of the Ombudsmen for the funds and programmes, accounting for 30 per cent of cases in 2010. More female staff requested assistance on relationship matters than their male counterparts. Staff often bring to the Office claims of lack of respect and inappropriate treatment, usually in the form of inappropriate disregard for colleagues or supervisees and lack of strong and supportive communication skills. A major attribute of positive relationships in the workplace is effective communication and fostering consensus-building through communication.

113. In UNHCR, international Professional staff members most frequently raise evaluative relationship issues, followed by concerns relating to job and career. National Professional staff, by contrast, primarily bring up job and career concerns. General Service staff members mostly raise issues relating to job and career, followed by evaluative relationships and peer and colleague relationships.

D. Issues by type of office location

114. The predominant concerns raised by visitors in 2010, regardless of their location, related to job and career. The second most numerous type of issue related to evaluative relationships, with compensation and benefits ranking third. The pattern was the same in 2009. For field missions, which are specific to the Secretariat, job and career-related issues were the most numerous. Compensation and benefits and evaluative relationships ranked second and third, respectively.

Figure VI
Categories of issues by type of office location across the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services



115. In the funds and programmes, 73 per cent of the cases were from the country offices and 27 per cent from headquarters. In both locations, job and career-related issues were the primary reason for the initial contact by visitors. A larger proportion of female visitors (29 per cent) had concerns about career progression or opportunities than their male counterparts (19 per cent).

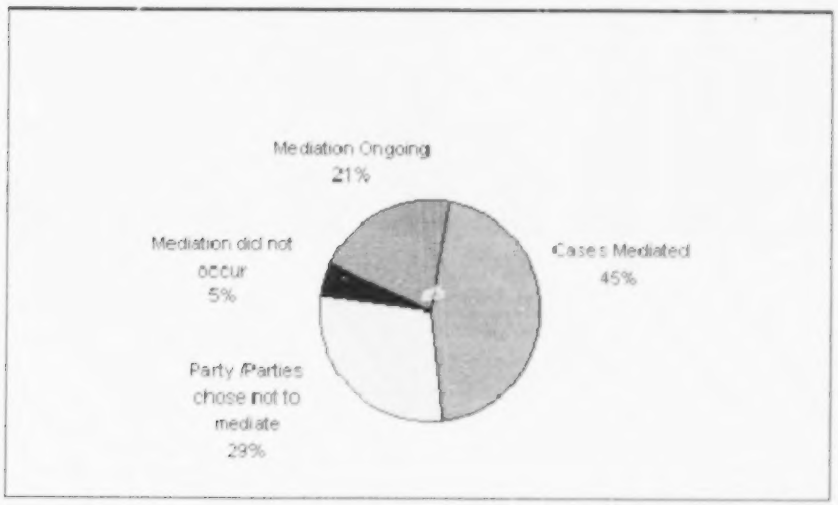
116. In UNHCR, just over one third of the issues were raised by headquarters staff. In this group, the two most frequently raised issues were evaluative relationships (33 per cent) and job and career (15 per cent). In offices away from headquarters, the two issues raised most frequently were job and career (32 per cent) and evaluative relationships (28 per cent). In this context, it is also noteworthy (although not included in the statistics presented) that the issues raised with the Respectful Workplace Advisers primarily concerned job and career (23 per cent) and peer and colleague relationships (21 per cent), while evaluative relationships constituted 15 per cent of all issues.

IV. Statistical information: mediation services

A. Case volume and outcomes

117. The present section provides statistical information with respect to cases and outcomes, demographics and types of issues mediated, covering the period from 1 July 2009 — when the new system of administration of justice was launched — until 31 December 2010.

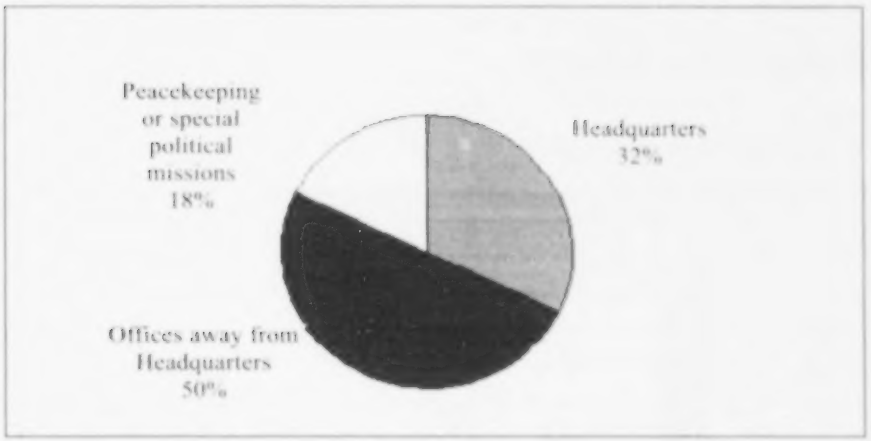
Figure VII
Mediation cases, 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2010



118. During the period from 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2010, the Mediation Service opened 62 cases, of which 28 (45 per cent) were mediated. Of the cases mediated, 21 (75 per cent) were successfully resolved and 7 (25 per cent) did not reach a successful resolution. In accordance with the mediation guidelines, the agreement of all parties to a dispute is required for mediation to proceed. A number of cases (29 per cent) were not able to be mediated owing to the fact that one or both parties chose not to mediate following a preliminary consultation, and three cases (5 per cent) were not mediated owing to other circumstances (either the case was not suitable for mediation or was resolved prior to mediation). A total of 13 cases (21 per cent) were ongoing at the end of 2010.

B. Demographics

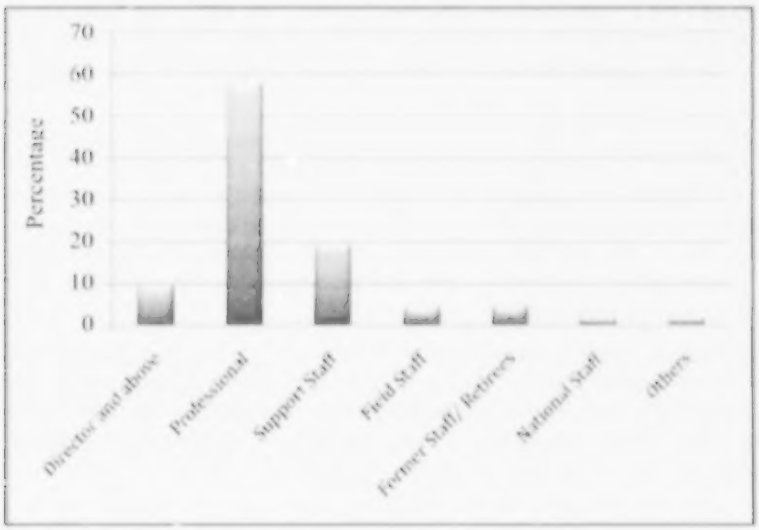
Figure VIII
Mediation demographics



119. The majority of cases that the Mediation Service handled during the reporting period originated in offices away from Headquarters (50 per cent). A total of 11 cases originated in field operations (18 per cent) and 20 (32 per cent) at Headquarters. This confirms that the majority of cases are field-based and thus that strengthened capacity is required to deal with cases in the regions.

C. Mediation cases by occupational group

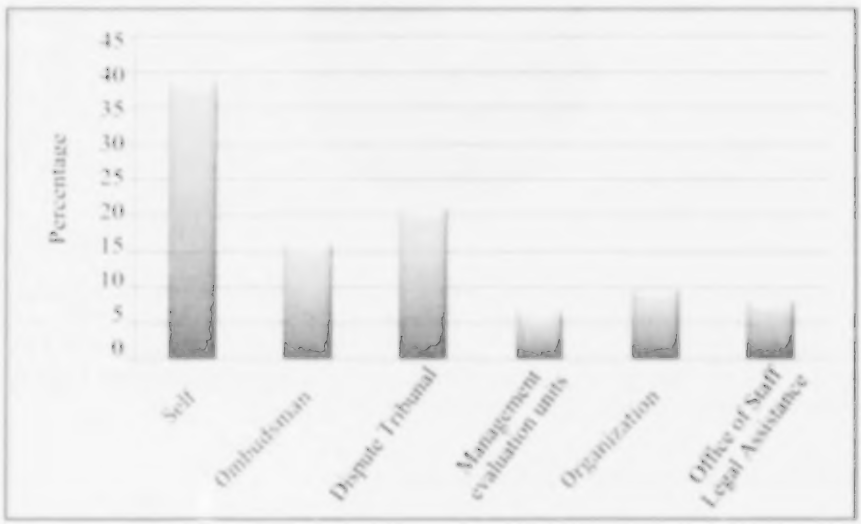
Figure IX
Mediation cases by occupational group



120. The top three occupational groups that sought or participated in mediation during the reporting period were as follows: Professional category (58 per cent), Director and above (10 per cent) and support staff (19 per cent). Those groups were followed by field staff and former staff/retirees (5 per cent each) and national staff/other (2 per cent each).

D. Mediation cases by source

Figure X
Mediation cases by source



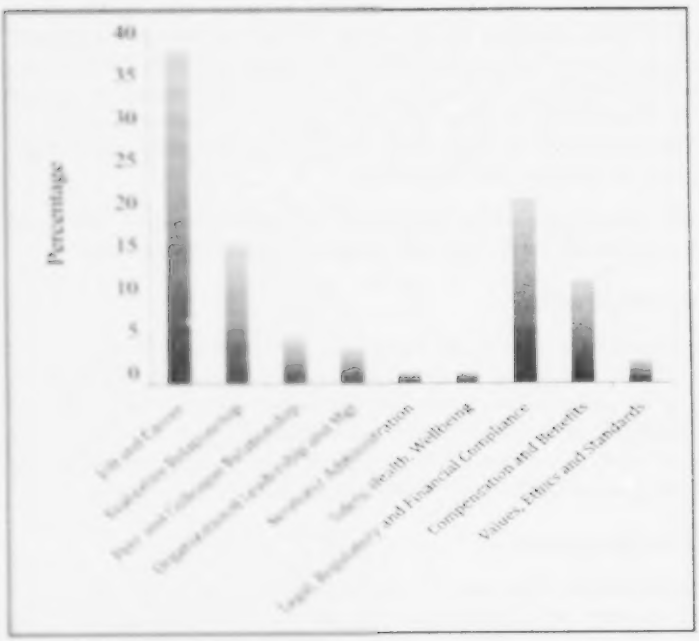
121. Mediation may be requested by one or all of the parties to a dispute, or referral for mediation may be made by the management evaluation units, the United Nations Dispute Tribunal, the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance or other similar offices. All requests for, or referrals to, mediation are reviewed by the Mediation Service to determine the suitability of the case for mediation.

122. Of the total number of cases opened during the reporting period, 24 (39 per cent) were requested by a party or parties to a dispute, 13 (21 per cent) were referred by the Dispute Tribunal and 10 (16 per cent) started as ombudsman cases and were subsequently mediated. The remaining cases (24 per cent) were referred by the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the management evaluation units and other parts of the Organization. Where cases were not found suitable for mediation, they were referred for ombudsman services.

123. The fact that the largest source of cases is the clients themselves is the result of concerted outreach efforts by the Mediation Service to raise awareness about the process and its benefits, and is also due to the success of mediation proceedings. It is expected that future outreach efforts, quality of service and further decentralization will lead to an increase in case volume.

E. Types of issues

Figure XI
Types of issues handled by the Mediation Service



124. The category with the largest number of cases brought to the Mediation Service is job and career (38 per cent), which includes issues related to contractual status. The second largest category relates to legal, regulatory, financial and compliance matters (21 per cent). The evaluative relationships category is the third largest (16 per cent). A second tier of issues involves compensation and benefits (12 per cent), organizational leadership and management (4 per cent), services and administration (1 per cent), safety, health and well-being (1 per cent) and values, ethics and standards (3 per cent).

V. Future directions

1. Building credibility and conflict competence

125. The Office will continue to look for ways to promote a culture of conflict prevention and trust-building. In this context, the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and UNHCR plan to further strengthen their work in the area of training, outreach and advocacy. The Office's communication strategy will therefore focus on three priority areas: (a) promoting informal resolution, including mediation, as a safe first step for the resolution of workplace disputes; (b) partnering with senior management and other important stakeholders to encourage and facilitate the use of the informal conflict resolution mechanism; and (c) continued

advocacy of a culture of collaboration and conflict prevention as an essential component of organizational health.

2. Capacity-building in the field

126. The Office will work to increase its capacity to serve staff in the field, including in remote areas, building on the work already accomplished through timely and effective action on cases and enhancing relationships with stakeholders, both at Headquarters and in the various regions. The Office will continue to explore the possibility of establishing a new regional branch to provide in-person intervention and better access to the deep field, including special political missions, and identifying financial resources for this purpose.

127. The funds and programmes and UNHCR will continue to explore options to assess and expand their respective Respectful Workplace Adviser programmes.

3. Measuring effectiveness of services

128. The Office plans to evaluate its operations under the new system of administration of justice, which was launched in July 2009, and the effectiveness and impact of its newly created structure, which is integrated with the funds and programmes and UNHCR and geographically decentralized, with seven regional offices. The panel of experts is expected to identify lessons learned and formulate recommendations for improvement in overall service delivery.

4. Strengthening the Mediation Service

129. Efforts to consolidate the work already done will be pursued by the Mediation Service in terms of delivery and quality of service and outreach, particularly in the field, and enhancing partnerships with stakeholders in the United Nations system, as well as with external professional organizations. The Division will also examine best practices and lessons learned in its first year of operation in order to strengthen service delivery. It will also further develop its roster of on-call mediators and work with relevant stakeholders to review the appropriateness of mandatory suspension of filing timelines while informal dispute resolution proceedings are taking place.

5. Contributing to the change management process

130. The Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services was invited to participate in the joint meeting of the Policy and Management Committees in May 2011 regarding the reform agenda. The Office is exploring ways of collaborating with the recently established change management team to assist in ongoing efforts to streamline and improve the efficiency of the Organization, including by sharing with the team the systemic trends and patterns it identifies.

VI. Resource requirements

131. Decentralization has presented the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services with a tremendous opportunity for growth and improved efficiency, as initially envisioned by the Redesign Panel and later endorsed by the General Assembly. However, the overall provision of resources for the Office, which is one of the areas most critical to its operations and effectiveness, continues to pose

a major challenge. As described in the Secretary-General's last report on the activities of the Office (A/65/303), funding from the regular budget has continued to rely on its pre-expansion budget to cover operational needs, in particular for the regional branches and the Mediation Services. This has seriously hampered the Office's capacity to respond to the needs of staff in the field, as well as emerging crises that warrant in-person intervention.

132. The Office has proactively adopted a number of cost-saving measures[12] to deal with budget constraints during the reform implementation process, which began in January 2008. In doing so, the Office was cognizant of the financial climate in which Member States operate and the Secretary-General's call for all departments to deliver more within existing resources. Bearing in mind that the prevention of conflict is, in itself, a cost-saving measure for the Organization, the Office will continue to explore every opportunity for the efficient use of its existing budget allocations. Nevertheless, it must be noted that such efforts cannot fully offset the challenges posed by the management of a decentralized structure and the high demand for informal conflict resolution, which was noted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, particularly in the Secretariat, where the number of cases increased by 70 per cent from 2009 to 2010.[13]

133. In paragraphs 24 and 25 of its resolution 65/251, the General Assembly stressed the importance of ensuring access for all staff members to the new administration of justice system, including to the rapid response teams deployed by the Office of the Ombudsman to respond to crises, and requested the Secretary-General to address the limitations to response capacity in future budget proposals. The present section explains the rationale for the Office's requirements additional to those requested in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 (A/66/6, sect. 1) and the areas it has identified for adjustments to meet its present needs.

134. The Office of the Ombudsman in the Secretariat underwent a comprehensive review by an external panel in 2007. One of the panel's main conclusions was that the demand for services was likely to grow as the Office became better known and better understood. The challenge was to keep monitoring the capacity of the Office to ensure that it was sufficient to absorb and process the caseload and provide adequate and timely follow-up. Otherwise, there was a risk that the Office's image could deteriorate, and that cases that could have been handled by the Ombudsman might be diverted to the formal system, with its attendant costs and congestion, thus replicating conditions that existed before the creation of the post of Ombudsman. The same concerns remain valid today.

135. The regular budget requirements for the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services are guided by four main principles:

(a) A needs assessment based on higher demand for services, taking into account experience gained since the establishment of the Office in 2002 and its decentralization in 2008;

(b) The provision of equal access to all staff, including in remote areas, and particularly those who serve in the deep field and harsh environments;

[12] See A/65/303, paras. 19-24.

[13] Resolution 65/251, para. 13.

(c) The encouragement of informal conflict resolution in line with the incentives identified in the Secretary-General's last report on the activities of the Office (A/65/303) and later endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 22 of its resolution 65/251. In this context, the General Assembly requested the inclusion of specific budget requirements in the programme budget to implement the incentives;

(d) The strengthening of the decentralized structure and the upgrade of the administrative capacity of the Office to manage its operations more effectively.

136. The Office's structure has changed significantly with the creation of seven regional branches, the Mediation Service and a pool of on-call ombudsmen and mediators. In the past two years, the Office has faced challenges in its day-to-day operations that affected the management of its financial and human resources. In its management letter dated 15 June 2010, the Board of Auditors noted that with decentralization, problems of daily management were likely to increase and would constitute a full-time occupation for an administrative officer who would provide consistency, coherence and coordination across the decentralized structure. Owing to its cross-cutting function, the Office is also increasingly involved in promoting conflict prevention and harmonious working conditions at Headquarters and in the field, which requires a substantial amount of coordination with the various stakeholders within the Organization. In order to fill these gaps and allow the United Nations Ombudsman and his or her staff to focus fully on their substantive functions and the resolution of workplace conflicts, it is proposed to establish two Professional posts that will provide the necessary support to the United Nations Ombudsman, the Director of the Office and the overall team.

137. Accordingly, it is proposed that the following two posts be established in the biennium 2012-2013:

(a) An Administrative Officer (P-4), who will assist the Director of the Office in managing and monitoring the human and financial resources of the Office and ensuring coherence and consistency in its standards and operations. This includes the administration of on-call ombudsmen and mediators and dealing with budgetary and financial issues for Headquarters and all its branches;

(b) A Special Assistant (P-4) to support the United Nations Ombudsman in strategic and operational planning as well as policy coordination and information management. It should be noted that all senior officials in the United Nations Secretariat have such pivotal support, which allows them to fully focus on their core responsibilities in providing strategic direction. The Special Assistant will support the United Nations Ombudsman and the Director in overseeing the day-to-day management of the immediate Office and coordinating inputs from the various components of the integrated structure, which would ensure a streamlined and coherent approach in the functioning of the overall operations. The incumbent will also support the United Nations Ombudsman in the processing and follow-up of high-risk cases and in interactions with senior counterparts, including in his or her work with intergovernmental bodies.

138. Travel resources in the amount of $180,000 for the biennium 2012-2013 are requested to enable the Office to resolve disputes through in-person intervention, to prevent issues from festering and affecting productivity and morale, and to prevent cases from proceeding to costly litigation. Such resources would also provide

opportunities to conduct additional activities such as conflict coaching and building conflict competence in duty stations with no ombudsman presence. The resources would also allow the regional ombudsmen to meet with staff in their immediate areas of responsibility and allow for regular visits to the regional commissions that currently have no ombudsman. Such a regular presence has been requested by management and staff repeatedly. In addition, the resources will be used to establish the critical ombudsman response team mechanism, which will allow for quick response and speedy resolution in unforeseen situations. As the informal system gained more recognition in 2010, the number of requests for immediate intervention by the United Nations ombudsmen or through on-call ombudsmen and mediators has increased significantly, and in several critical cases an ombudsman or a mediator team could not be dispatched because of the lack of travel resources. Lastly, the resources will allow the Office to hold an annual retreat for all staff of the Office to exchange best practices and lessons learned with a view to enhancing the overall operations of the Office.

139. Training resources in the amount of $150,000 are requested to cover training fees, associated travel and training-related conference fees for the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, including the regional branches. This would also allow them, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management, to deliver training modules on conflict management in their area of responsibility to build conflict competence. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services is increasingly requested to conduct such training sessions with groups of staff in collaborative conflict-handling as part of conflict prevention and building conflict awareness. This approach will increase the Office's capacity to enhance the conflict management ability of clients and other target groups, such as managers.

140. Accordingly, should the General Assembly agree with the above proposals, additional resource requirements in the amount of $918,400 (before recosting) would be considered in accordance with the provisions governing the contingency fund in accordance with the terms of Assembly resolutions 41/213 and 42/211. In this regard, it is recalled that the Assembly, in its resolution 65/262, approved a contingency fund for the biennium 2012-2013 in the amount of $40.5 million.

141. All new posts reflected in the present report are proposed to be established as from 1 January 2012. Given that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in paragraph 20 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/7), recommended that information on the delayed impact of posts should be reflected in any new proposals, the Assembly may wish to note that the additional requirements for the full costing of the proposed two new posts in the biennium 2014-2015 are currently estimated at $352,400: under section 1, Overall policymaking, direction and coordination, $306,000, and under section 37, Staff assessment, $46,400, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

VII. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

142. **Accordingly, should the General Assembly approve the proposals contained in the present report for additional resources, it may wish:**

(a) To approve the establishment of two new P-4 posts effective 1 January 2012 under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013;

(b) To appropriate a total amount of $918,400 (before recosting) under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, comprising increases under section 1, Overall policymaking, direction and coordination ($725,400); section 29D, Office of Central Support Services ($135,800); and section 37, Staff assessment ($57,200), to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. The provision would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

143. **The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services looks forward to the General Assembly's favourable consideration of its additional resource requirements and its continued support for informal resolution as a key first step in the resolution of workplace disputes, including system-wide and speedy implementation of incentives to encourage the usage of informal resolution.**